

SUBJECTS.

*Adoption of measures
for preventing the
export trade in fire-
wood.*

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KERALA



possible. So far as reserved forests and reserved lands are concerned, cultivation in such areas, without the special permission of Government, would be illegal under the Regulation. Even in regard to unreserved lands, the rules provide for the Forest department controlling the cultivation of hill slopes in the interests of the reserved and royal trees. This control is necessary and will not be reduced.

Mr. S. Subramonia Karayalan (Member, Shencottah Taluk) said that the indiscriminate grant of permission for the cutting of trees from the forests to all who applied for the same would, in the long run, cause the total extinction of the most valuable species of timber. He observed that he had himself seen the valuable forests being denuded at the time of the boring of the Ariankavu tunnel. Till the passing of an order by the Acting Conservator of Forests recently, the forests on either side of the railway line from Punaloor to Shencottah were mercilessly cut and several cart-loads of timber were removed out of Travancore. The result was that the periodical monsoon was considerably affected and the taluk of Shencottah suffered most for want of water owing to the failure of the monsoon. The small loss of revenue that might be caused by the wholesale prevention of the export of firewood should not, under the circumstances, be allowed to weigh in deciding the question. Even with regard to local consumption, arrangements might be made for first cutting down only withered trees and those blown down by the wind before felling trees containing solid timber. It would also be an advantage if the Forest department would undertake to collect and stock such useless timber in the depots and sell the same to merchants with some commission, if not at prime cost. It was further necessary that the slopes on the sides of hill-streams should be acquired by Government, if they be found to belong to private individuals. The Member requested that the above suggestions might be kindly considered and early action taken to give effect to them as far as possible.

Dewan's reply.—The suggestions of the Member are noted. The Forest department is alive to the importance of this question. Permits for cutting firewood for export from reserved forests, reserved lands and unreserved lands have been practically stopped. In regard to *private* lands, Government have no right to say to their owners that they shall not cut and export the wood on such lands. All that we can do in such cases is to levy an export duty, which we are now doing, at practically the maximum rate possible under the Interportal Trade Convention. Government cannot do anything further in the matter.